



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

CONCEPTIONS OF A FUTURE LIFE.

BY THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON FARRAR.

THE question before us is not one which treats on what is usually called Eschatology. In other words, we are not now to consider the problem of future reward and punishment, but the far more general question of the Immortality of the soul, and the bare conceivability of any incorporeal existence. Let it be said at the very beginning that we are dealing with matters which have occupied the thoughts of man since man began to think at all ; and with beliefs respecting which the present solution transcends the understanding. The present solution even transcends the reason ; but the ultimate solution remains in the stronger and purer hands of a hope which is sweet as fruition, of a faith which is strong as light.

Joubert, as quoted by Mr. Lilly, in his recent book on "The Great Enigma," sums up philosophy in the sentence : "*Je, d'où, où, pour comment, c'est toute la philosophie ; l'existence, l'origine, le lieu, la fin, et les moyens.*" "I know not whence I am, I know not whence I came, I know not whither I am going ; I wonder that I am so merry," wrote a German philosopher. It is told of Schopenhauer that once, in the streets of Berlin, he accidentally ran against a stranger. "What are you, sir ?" asked the gentleman, indignantly. "*What am I?*" answered the famous pessimist ; "Ah ! sir, if you would only tell me that, I would give you all that I possess."

We *have* bodies, but we *are* souls, we say. But there are materialists in these days, and there have been a few in most epochs of intellectual activity, who will not allow us even this much. The Danish Prince in the tragedy signs himself, "Thine . . . *While this machine is to him, Hamlet.*" The materialist tells us that our bodies are not the machines we use, not the tents in which we live, but are our total—ourselves. We began with them, and with them we shall end, in dust. Our whole life is, they tell us :

"A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere our birth,
To that last nothing under earth,"

and as for the things which we are pleased to call "our souls,"

they assure us that they are mere delusions and nonentities. So it is clearly laid down in Mr. Lilly's quotation from M. Monteel's *Petit Catéchisme du Libre-Penseur*.*

Q. What is the soul ?

A. *Nothing*.

Q. It is not a thing, then, existent in nature ?

A. No.

Q. What is the distinction between soul and body ?

A. It is a simple analytical process.

* * * * *

Q. The materiality of the soul, then, involving its negative, there is no future life ?

A. No; as the soul no longer constitutes for us an independent and imperishable individuality, there is no future life.

We quote this simply as a curiosity, and not even as a novel one. Voltaire has already argued that the soul is only an "*abstraction réalisée*," "like the ancient goddess Memoria, or such as a personification of the blood-forming force could be." More than two thousand years ago Pherecrates, of Phthia, had demonstrated to his own satisfaction "that the soul is nothing whatever; that it is a mere empty name; that there is neither mind nor soul either in man or beast; that the force by which we act or feel is equally diffused through the whole body, is inseparable from the body, and is in fact nothing whatever but the body pure and simple." What have we to say to such conclusions? *Securus judicet orbis terrarum*. We may safely set aside assertions respecting the very nature of our existence which have been all but unanimously repudiated by all races of men, in all countries, of all conditions, in all ages. Even the consciousness of a child tells him that there is a distinction between his soul and his body:

"The baby, new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is pressed
Against the circle of the breast
Has never thought that 'this is I.'

But, as he grows, he gathers much,
And learns the use of 'I' and 'me,'
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in,
His isolation grows defined."

The separate existence of the soul has been as much the absolute conviction of the supremest intellects, which have shone upon

* *The Great Enigma*, pp. 50 seq.

the world, as of the humblest and most illiterate peasants. The *Cogito ergo sum* of Descartes is unanswerable. To attribute the illimitable range and diversities of thought to nothing more than infinitesimal molecular changes in the grey substance of the brain is the most miserable, absurd, unverifiable, and impossible of all guesses. Mr. Bain may well acknowledge the difficulty of "storing up in three pounds' weight of albuminous and fatty tissue all of our acquired knowledge !"

All mankind then, except perhaps one in every ten millions, will admit that we *have* souls, and that essentially we *are* souls.

But what is the soul ?

This question has agitated all philosophy, heathen, as well as Christian.

Heathen philosophy had nothing but the merest empiricism to offer in its solution. "*Quid sit porro ipse animus, aut ubi, aut unde, magna dissensio est,*" says Cicero in his Tusculan questions. No wonder, therefore, that some philosophers believed that the soul perished with the body ; others that it lasted for a time and then was dissipated ; others that it continued for ever. As to its localization, Aristotle placed it in the heart ; Empedocles in the pericardium ; others, like our modern materialists, *identified* it with the brain ; to others again the soul (*animus*) was but the breath (*anima*). Zeno thought that it was a breathing fire. Aristoxenus vaguely declared that it was a harmony (*ipsius corporis intentio*) ; Democritus, that it resulted from a fortuitous concourse of atoms ; Xenocrates, following Pythagoras, defined it, not very luminously, as "a self-moving member." Plato analyzed it into the Reason, the Passion and the Desires. Aristotle thought that it was a sort of fifth essence, to which he gave the name *Eutetechy*—a name which so puzzled Hermolaus Barbarus that he is said to have evoked the Demon to tell him its true significance ! So did the ancient philosopher, like Milton's fallen spirits,

"Find no end in wandering mazes lost."

But at least the supremest among them, especially Plato and Aristotle, saw that there was a clear distinction between the merely animal and nutritive life and the true life by which we live. Plato saw deep into the bearings of the inquiry when he placed the irascible and the appetitive or concupiscential elements of our nature absolutely under the control of the supreme principle (*τὸ ἡγεμονικόν*), which is reason and conscience. The

lower parts of the soul, he says, passion and sensuousness, belong to the subordinate organs of perception and representation ; but the instrument of rational cogitation is the supreme and indivisible element of this soul in man. Aristotle went to the root of the matter when he declared that, since thought, foresight, learning, discovery, memory and love have no affinity with any of the four material elements, there must be a fifth element—call it an Eutetechy, or what you will—which is wholly independent of them. It is a vital force which is not merely constructive and nutritive (*τὸ θρεπτικόν*) which assimilates and reproduces, like the life of the plant. It is a reason (*νοῦς*) beyond and above anything which exists in the animal, and which, though subject to temporary influences, is divine, preëxistent, active, determining and immortal.*

I say that this goes to the root of the matter, because the only uneasiness which haunts the minds of most men is lest the soul, after all—whatever it may be—should prove to be only an inseparable function of the body. They are half tempted to believe with Anaxemines that “it is the nature of limbs which thinketh in men”; or, in other words, that thought is but the correlate of human organization. If so, they dread lest the mind and the soul should end with the body. In answer to the difficulty we might point to the phenomena of dreams ; or to the lightning-like activity of the spirit, which cannot belong to dead matter, of which inertia is an essential property ; or to the power of the will to move and regulate the body, as when Turenne, shivering as he rode to battle, said to his body, “Aha ! you tremble, but if you knew where I mean to take you to-day you would tremble much more ;” or to the charming combinations of fancy ; or to the regal powers of the imagination. All these prove, as Sir John Davies sings, that

“There is a soul, a nature which contains
The power of sense within a greater power.
Which doth employ and use the sense’s pains,
But sits and rules within her private bower.”

But to take only one of Aristotle’s points, if the soul were but the body how would memory be possible ? We remember the days of old, the vernal hours of childhood, when “the very breeze had mirth in it” ; the long-lost mother who folded our childish

* Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philos.*, i., 123, 164, 168.

hands in prayer. Dr. Arnold said that when he was Professor of History at Oxford he quoted books which he could not have seen since he was four years old.

How can it possibly be said that it is *our bodies* which remember. Our bodies are in a condition of perpetual flux. They change—every particle of them—in some seven years. They have been scattered and renewed—every particle of them—many times over, since we were children, yet we are the same. Our individuality is unbroken. “*Dissimiles hic vir et ille puer*”; we may be but “stupid changelings of ourselves,” but undoubtedly we cannot disintegrate ourselves from ourselves. How can memory and the other functions of the soul be inseparable from the body, if they continue—unchanged even when they are latent—though not one of the same material particles now belongs to us? “It is,” says Coleridge, “only to the coarseness of our senses, or rather to the defect and limitation of our percipient faculty, that the visible object appears the same even for a moment. As the column of blue smoke from a cottage chimney in the breathless summer noon, or the steadfast-seeming cloud on the edge-point of a hill in the driving air-current, which momentarily condensed and recomposed is the common phantom of a thousand successors; such is the flesh which our bodily eyes transmit to us; which our palates taste; which our hands touch. . . . And we need only reflect on these facts with a calm and silent spirit to learn the utter emptiness and unmeaningness of the vaunted mechanico-corpuscular philosophy, with both its twins, materialism on the one hand, and idealism, rightlier named subjective Idolism, on the other; the one obtruding on us a world of spectres and apparitions; the other a mazy dream.”*

Yet even when we are thoroughly convinced that the soul is something wholly apart from the body, and that the body is only its machine, its instrument, its house of clay, it may seem to us so strange that it could act or feel apart from this machine and house, that the possibility of its immaterial existence may appear to be inconceivable. This difficulty would indeed only apply for Christians to the period between death and the resurrection of the body, in which they believe. Into the material difficulties of the Resurrection it is needless here to enter. Suffice it to say that by the resurrection of the body we by no means imply that

**Aids to Reflection*, p. 332.

the identical particles will be re-composed which have crumbled into dust, and may now, as Shakespeare says, be used to "stop a hole," or be blown about the desert or sealed in the iron hills. When we say that *we* did so and so in childhood we mean that beings did it with whom we are identical, though not one atom of our bodies remains unchanged. So it may be at the resurrection; and the Gospels clearly indicate to us that the Resurrection-body of the Risen Christ was a glorified body, and was no longer liable to material conditions. But, while all Christians may concede this, they still fail to conceive how the soul could live immediately after death. They would fain, with Milton,

"Unsphere
The spirit of Plato, to unfold
What worlds or what vast regions hold
The immortal mind that hath forsook
Her mansion in the fleshly nook."

Now no one can pretend to *solve* this problem, but perhaps the following considerations may make it seem less difficult.

I. Since the days of Tertullian, or, at any rate, since those ignorant hermits of the Thebaid, who thought that God had "a body, heats and passions," no one has believed in a corporeal Deity. Even Voltaire held, as Locke did, that the existence of God is *demonstrable* by the cosmological and teleological arguments,* and yet that God is a circle whose circumference is everywhere, its centre nowhere. If, then, God is a Spirit, why does the spirit of man, which is a particle of divine air and an effluence of his glory, require of necessity a material embodiment? †

II. And why has this difficulty been practically regarded as non-existent, alike by heathens as by Christians, if it were a thing naturally inconceivable by us? The human race, in general, has spontaneously and instinctively assumed that the soul, as a simple and uncompounded substance, is naturally immortal. The earliest Greeks believed in the thin, shadowy, fleeting ghost of Elysium, the *εἰδωλα καμόντων*. The early Hebrews, before Christ had brought life and immortality to light, believed in their dim *Sheol* and *Tsalmaveth*. The dying Hadrian sang to his soul:

"Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes comesque corporis,
Quae nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula?
Nec ut soles dabis jocos."

* See Ueberweg, *Hist. of Philos.*, etc., ii., 125.

† See Lactant., *De Op. Det.*, 19; St. Aug., *De Trin.*, x., 12, 13, 15.

The address is not unlike the famous lines of Mrs. Barbauld :

“ Life, I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part ;
And when, or how, or where we met,
I own to me’s a secret yet.

* * * * *

Oh, whither, whither, dost thou fly ?
Ah ! tell me where I must seek this compound I ?

* * * * *

Yet canst thou without thought and feeling be ?
Oh, say, what art thou when no more thou’rt thee ?

* * * * *

Life, we’ve been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather ;
’Tis hard to part when friends are dear ;
Perhaps ’twill cost a sigh, or tear,
Then steal away, give little warning ;
Choose thine own time ;
Say not good night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me good morning.’

III. The difficulty has, however, led to the theory known as “conditional immortality,” condemned as a heresy by the Catholic Church ; and to the doctrine of Metempsychosis, of which Lessing was one of the most illustrious supporters. But if the possibility of immaterial existence for the soul be deemed so inconceivable, among Protestants at any rate, the doctrine of *Psychopannychia*—i. e., the sleep of the soul between death and resurrection—is not, I suppose, a heresy. To me, I confess, no hypothesis commends itself less. It was vigorously refuted by Tertullian,* and no less vigorously by Calvin † ; but it is still the doctrine of the Nestorians ‡ ; it has been maintained by Bonnet, and by Cudworth,§ and is said to have been the conviction of the late Archbishop Whateley, maintained by him in his anonymous volume.

IV. If the church has looked askance on this theory, there is at least no difficulty about the theory of Rudolph Wagner.|| Carl Vogt had argued against the independent existence of the soul because “physiology sees in psychical activities nothing but

* *De anima*, 58.

† Opp., ix., 38, *De Psychopannychia*.

‡ Asseranni. *Bible Orient.* iii., pt. ii., 343.

§ Bonnet, *Palingenesis*, 1789. Cudworth, *Intellectual System*, c. v.

|| *Ueber Leelensubstanz*, Göttingen, 1856, and *Ueber Wissen und Glauben*, id.

functions of the brain"—a doctrine which results in the conclusion that "man *is* what he *eats*," and therefore eating and drinking are his highest human functions ! In answer to this, Wagner urges "that the transplanting of the soul into another portion of the universe may be effected as quickly and easily as the transmission of light from the sun to the earth ; and, in like manner, the same soul may return at a future epoch and be provided with a new bodily integument."

But, in conclusion, be it observed that we do not pretend to prove or to explain ; we do what is a higher act of our nature, we believe. We have, as Pascal says, an idea of the truth that no Pyrrhonism can overcome. In Mrs. Deland's "John Ward, Preacher" there is a striking scene in which the dying lawyer, in speaking to his somewhat epicurean Vicar, says :

"How strange ! How strange ! And where shall I be ? knowing—or perhaps fallen in, an eternal sleep. How does it seem to you, Doctor ? That was what I wanted to ask you ; do you feel sure of anything afterwards ?"

"The rector did not escape the penetrating glance of those strangely bright eyes. He looked into them and then wavered and turned away."

"Do you ?" said the lawyer.

The other put his hands up to his face a moment.

"Ah !" he answered sharply, "I don't know—I can't tell. I—I don't know, Denner !"

"No," replied Mr. Denner, with tranquil satisfaction, "I supposed not—I supposed not. But when a man gets where I am, it seems the one thing in the world worth being sure of." ¶

But, after all, if the Rector could have answered, "This is not, and cannot be, a matter of human knowledge, but of divine faith," the dying lawyer ought to have felt that he had not been betrayed. We may argue with St. Thomas Aquinas that the soul being immaterial must be immortal, since a pure form cannot destroy itself, nor, through the dissolution of a material substratum be destroyed ; and that the soul must be immaterial, since it is capable of thinking the universal, whereas, if it were a form inseparable from matter, it could only think the individual. But if a man cannot grasp or cannot accept this reasoning, there is nothing shocking in that sort of agnosticism which admits that "what we know is little, what we are ignorant of is immense." It is not unaided nature which teaches us the existence, the immortality of the soul. It is the light which lighteth every man who is born

¶ "John Ward, Preacher," p. 337.

into the world. It is the voice of God in the soul of man. Nature says :

“Thou makest thine appeal to me :
I bring to life, I bring to death ;
The spirit does but wear the breath,
I know no more.”

Nay, when we maintain that man is God's supremest work and that God is love, and when Nature, partially observed and imperfectly interpreted,

Red in beak and claw with ravin, shrieks against our creed,”

we may well exclaim :

Oh life and future thou art frail !
What hope of answer or address ?

to which peals the high answer of a faith which nothing can shake, which is above argument, and beyond the apprehension of the purely human understanding.

“Behind the veil ! behind the veil !”

F. W. FARRAR.